

*Goshen, NY* – Today U.S. Rep. John Hall (D-NY19) and Edward Henry, Wallkill River National Wildlife Refuge Manager, announced that a public hearing on the Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment for the Wallkill River National Wildlife Refuge will be held in New York on Thursday, March 6th. The hearing will take place at 7:00 p.m. at the Warwick Town Hall, located at 132 Kings Highway. "Local farmers and members of the New York communities surrounding the Wallkill River have been deeply affected by flooding of the River," said Hall. "I am glad the Fish and Wildlife Service is willing to listen to the concerns of residents and area farmers."

Last week, Congressman Hall wrote to the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to request a public hearing in New York related to the Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment for the Wallkill River National Wildlife Refuge. A significant expansion of the Wallkill River National Wildlife Refuge has been proposed throughout the New York and New Jersey portions of the refuge. While two public hearings were scheduled in New Jersey as part of the USFWS's study process, none were originally scheduled in New York.

"It is imperative that New York communities severely impacted by flooding from the Walkill are provided with ample opportunity to make their views heard," wrote Congressman Hall to USFWS Director H. Dale Hall.

Hall wrote to the USFWS in response to Warwick Town Supervisor Michael Sweeton's initial formal request to the USFWS for a public hearing. Congressman Hall worked with Supervisor Sweeton and the Wallkill River National Wildlife Refuge to make certain New Yorkers would get a public hearing.

"I want to thank Congressman Hall for his quick action in helping us obtain a hearing on the refuge expansion plan here in New York" said Supervisor Sweeton.

"Wallkill Refuge National Wildlife Refuge is pleased to be able to work with its local communities to be able to host a public comment meeting for its Comprehensive Conservation Plan in New York State," said Edward Henry. "The refuge is proud of its track record of working with willing sellers to build the refuge. By collaborating with local communities and voluntary sellers, the refuge will continue its process of slowly building its land base while preserving the natural heritage and resources of the Wallkill Valley."

The USFWS has identified additional areas surrounding the current boundaries of the Wallkill River National Wildlife Refuge as "biologically significant land" in its Land Protection Plan. In Orange County, parts of Minisink and the Black Dirt Region of Warwick have been proposed for acquisition.

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